



# On the Gulch

A Newsletter For and About City of Helena Employees

## Empathy - The #1 Customer Need

A woman walked into the gym where I was working at the front desk. She was waiting in line with the early gym regulars, 5:30 in the morning, with a pile of clothes in her hands.

As I was checking in members, I could see her nervously shuffle forward, eyes darting around the room, obviously uncomfortable.

She walked up to the counter, and in a defensive voice, more a statement than a question, she said:

"Can I leave these here?"

Her arms held out the pile of clothes with a pair of shoes at the bottom, motioning toward the high counter of the front desk, next to the monitor for member check-in.

"Sure! ... You'd like to leave those clothes on the counter; are you leaving them for someone to pick up?"

"No. I don't know where else to put them!"

I realized it was her first time at the gym. It may have been her first time to visit a gym - ever. She seemed out of sorts, uncomfortable, out of her element. I remembered the first time I walked into a gym. I had no idea where to begin, where the locker rooms were, what the protocol was for using the equipment. I was so nervous, afraid I'd do something wrong, like everyone was watching. Smiling my most welcoming smile, I said:

"You must be new to the gym! If you'll stand aside for just a minute, I'll finish checking in these members, and then I'll give you a quick tour. We'll start with the locker room where you

can stash your clothes & shoes. Is that ok?"

I watched as her shoulders dropped with relief. After a few minutes, I walked around the gate and gave her the tour. I introduced her to a few of our friendly members and said they would be happy to help if she had questions. I told her I was available for questions as well.

She smiled and waved as she left the gym about an hour later. I saw her three mornings each week after that, she always smiled when she left.

Here are some guidelines:

- ≈ Ask questions, observe, and listen closely to the answers. One of the biggest mistakes we make as employees, supervisors, partners & parents, is to ask a question and not listen to the answer. Not only is it annoying to the receiver, it immediately obscures the conversation.
- ≈ Try responsive listening or mirroring. Ask the question, then repeat the answer back to the person in different words to make sure you understood the answer. Often a customer is upset about something completely unrelated to his current complaint. By mirroring his answer to your question, you establish the relationship as one of caring and give the customer the opportunity to consider what he is really asking.
- ≈ Answer the question honestly, with caring for the customer as your primary goal. Even if you cannot make the customer happy with the answer he wants, you must keep the thought that you care for the person at the top of your answer.

≈ Demonstrate empathy by finding an acceptable solution and follow up to make sure there is some level of satisfaction.

Keep in mind that the customer has a life outside this moment. You cannot know what went on five minutes, five days, or five years in the life of your customer before she walked in your door, called, or emailed you.

You do not know the context of the customer's mood or feelings about the issue she brings to you. Demonstrate empathy by considering your own humanity.

Are you always kind? Have you had bad days or phases in your life when you were less than your best? Are you perfect at communicating your needs every time?

I can with certainty answer that no, I am not always kind and a perfect communicator.

Give every customer the benefit of the doubt; begin each interaction with positive expectations and a smile.

**Remember to treat your internal customers the same way you treat your external customers!**



## Employee News

### Welcome to:

Jason Browne &  
Arnold Hatling,  
Parks Maintenance,  
and  
Chad Cross,  
Utility Maintenance

### Congratulations to:

Helena Police Chief  
Troy McGee on his 40  
years of service to the  
City of Helena; and

Kevin Kelly, Firefighter of  
the year!

*Check out this season at the Helena Civic Center!*

**New Shanghai Circus, January 28**

**Flashdance the Musical, February 4**

**Rhythmic Circus, February 27**

**Saturday Night Fever, April 8**

*Get your tickets online: [www.helenaciviccenter.com](http://www.helenaciviccenter.com)*



## Sidewalk Snow Removal - Do Your Part!

The condition of adjacent sidewalks are the responsibility of the property owner!

Quality sidewalks improve safety and add to the enjoyment and value of our homes.

Show you care about the safety of our neighbors, family and friends by keeping your sidewalk maintained and clear.

Snow will fall soon and our sidewalk snow removal law has changed:

You must clear your sidewalk within 24 hours, starting when snowfall stops.

If you are going out of town, make arrangements to have your sidewalks shoveled in case of snow!

If you have cracked or damaged sidewalks, or need to install new sidewalks, the city has a program to help you pay for these projects. Contact David Knoepke (447-8099) about our voluntary sidewalk program.

Remember, our community relies on our sidewalks. Obstacles like snow, ice, and trip hazards make it harder for our neighbors to walk in our community, particularly the disabled, elderly, and school children.

Do your part - keep our neighborhoods walkable.



## Perfect Zucchini Bread

**Grate 2 1/2 cups zucchini and set aside**

### Beat well together:

- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar

### Then add:

- 1 1/8 cup vegetable oil
- 2 tsp. vanilla (the real stuff is best)

Continue to beat till smooth

### In a separate container combine and gently stir:

- 2 cups bread flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 1/8 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. allspice
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg

Mix about 3/4's of the dry ingredients into the wet on low speed, then remove from mixer.

Gently fold in the grated zucchini and rest of dry ingredients **by hand**.

Pour into well greased bread pans (lightly grease if non-stick pans) and sprinkle some cinnamon/sugar mix on the tops.

Makes 1 Large and 1 mini; 2 medium, or 6-8 mini loaves.

Bake for 30 minutes - mini; 50 minutes - medium; or 60 minutes for large. Check with toothpick for doneness.